VOL. VIII. NUMB. 613.

The SPECTATOR.

Murranum hic atavos et avorum antiqua ſonantem
Nomina, per regeſque actum genus omne Latinos,
Præcipitem ſcopulo, atque ingentis turbine ſaxi
Excutit, effunditque ſolo. Virg.

WEDNESDAY, *October* 27. 1714.

IT is highly laudable to pay Reſpect to Men who are deſcended from worthy Anceſtors, not only out of Gratitude to thoſe who have done Good to Mankind, but as it is an Encouragement to others to follow their Example. But this is an Honour to be received, not demanded, by the Deſcendents of great Men; and they who are apt to remind us of their Anceſtors, only put us upon making Compariſons to their own Diſadvantage. There is ſome Pretence for boaſting of Wit, Beauty, Strength, or Wealth, becauſe the Communication of them may give Pleaſure or Profit to others; but we can have no Merit, nor ought we to claim any Reſpect, becauſe our Fathers acted well, whether we would or no.

The following Letter ridicules the Folly I have mentioned in a new, and, I think, not diſagreeable Light.

Mr. SPECTATOR,

'WERE the Genealogy of every Family preſerved, there would probably be no Man valued or deſpiſed on Account of his Birth. There is ſcarce a Beggar in the Streets, who would not find himſelf lineally deſcended from ſome great Man; nor any one of the higheſt Title, who would not diſcover ſeveral baſe and indigent Perſons among his Anceſtors. It would be a pleaſant Entertainment to ſee one Pedigree of Men appear together, under the ſame Characters they bore when they acted their reſpective Parts among the Living. Suppoſe therefore a Gentleman, full of his illuſtrious Family, ſhould, in the ſame manner as *Virgil* makes *Æneas* look over his Deſcendants, ſee the whole Line of his Progenitors paſs in Review before his Eyes. With how many varying Paſſions, would he behold Shepherds and Soldiers, States-men and Artificers, Princes and Beggars, march in the Proceſſion of five thouthouſand Years! Now would his Heart ſink or flutter at the ſeveral Sports of Fortune in a Scene ſo diverſified with Rags and Purple, Handicraft Tools and Sceptres, Enſigns of Dignity and Emblems of Diſgrace; and how would his Fears and Apprehenſions, his Tranſports and Mortifications, ſucceed one another, as the Line of his Genealogy appear'd bright or obſcure?

'In moſt of the Pedigrees hung up in old Manſion Houſes, you are ſure to find the firſt in the Catalogue a great Stateſman, or a Soldier with an honourable Commiſſion. The honeſt Artificer that begot him, and all his frugal Anceſtors before him, are torn off from the Top of the Regiſter; and you are not left to imagine, that the noble Founder of the Family ever had a Father. Were we to trace many boaſted Lines farther backwards, we ſhould loſe them in a Mob of Tradeſmen, or a Crowd of Ruſticks, without hope of ſeeing them emerge again: not unlike the old *Appian* way, which, after having run many Miles in Length, loſes it ſelf in a Bog.

'I lately made a Visit to an old Country Gentleman, who is very far gone in this sort of *Family-Madness*. I found him in his Study perusing an old Register of his Family, which he had just then discovered, as it was branched out in the Form of a Tree, upon a Skin of Parchment. Having the honour to have some of his Blood in my Veins, he permitted me to cast my Eye over the Boughs of this venerable Plant; and asked my Advice in the Reforming of some of the superfluous Branches.

'We passed slightly over three or four of our immediate Forefathers, whom we knew by Tradition, but were soon stopped by an Alderman of *London*, who, I perceived, made my Kinsman's Heart go pit-a-pat. His Confusion increased when he found the Alderman's Father to be a Grasier; but he recovered his Fright upon seeing *Justice of the Quorum* at the end of his Titles. Things went on pretty well, as we threw our Eyes occasionally over the Tree, when unfortunately he perceived a Merchant-Tailor perched on a Bough, who was said greatly to have increased the Estate; he was just a going to cut him off, if he had not seen *Gent.* after the Name of his Son; who was recorded to have mortgaged one of the Manors his honest Father had purchased. A Weaver, who was burnt for his Religion in the Reign of Queen *Mary*, was pruned away without Mercy; as was likewise a Yeoman, who died of a Fall from his own Cart. But great was our Triumph in one of the Blood who was beheaded for High-Treason; which nevertheless was not a little allayed by another of our Ancestors who was hanged for stealing Sheep. The Expectations of my good Cousin were wonderfully raised by a Match into the Family of a Knight, but unfortunately for us this Branch proved barren: On the other hand *Margery* the Milk-maid being twined round a Bough, it flourished out into so many Shoots, and bent with so much Fruit, that the old Gentleman was quite out of Countenance. To comfort me, under this Disgrace, he singled out a Branch ten times more fruitful than the other, which, he told me, he valued more than any in the Tree, and bad me be of good Comfort. This enormous Bough was a Graft out of a *Welch* Heiress, with so many *Ap's* upon it that it might have made a little Grove by it self. From the Trunk of the Pedigree, which was chiefly composed of Labourers and Shepherds, arose a huge Sprout of Farmers; this was branched out into Yeomen, and ended in a Sheriff of the County, who was Knighted for his good Service to the Crown, in bringing up an Address. Several of the Names, that seemed to disparage the Family, being looked upon as Mistakes, were lopped off as rotten or withered; as, on the contrary, no small Number appearing without any Titles, my Cousin, to supply the Defects of the Manuscript, added *Esq;* at the End of each or them.

'This Tree so pruned, dressed, and cultivated, was, within a few Days, transplanted into a large Sheet of Vellum and placed in the great Hall, where it attracts the Veneration of his Tenants, every *Sunday* Morning, while they wait till his Worship is ready to go to Church; wondering that a Man, who had so many Fathers before him, should not be made a Lord, or at least a Justice of the Peace.

ADVERTISEMENTS.

This Day is Published,

The Second Edition of an Exact Account of the Form and Ceremony of His Majesty's Coronation, as it was solemnly perform'd in the Collegiate Church at Westminster, on Wednesday the 20th of this Instant October, price 3 d. Sold by J. Baker in Pater-noster-row. Where may be had, the respectful Behaviour of the Dissenters towards Her late Majesty, &c. Exemplified from their own Writings, clearing them from the unjust Accusations of a late Censorious Layman, as well as from the Reflections in a Preface to the Sufferings of the Clergy, price 4 d.

Richard Chamberlayne, Mercer, is removed from the Great Wheat-Sheaf, to the King's Arms (the new House) on Ludgate-Hill, selleth all Sorts of Silks, Silver and Gold Stuffs, &c.

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